

Bullet proof vests give cops protection

By Nicole Souza
Mystic River Press

GROTON -- Groton Town Police anticipate a 50-percent rebate from the federal government for seven bulletproof vests courtesy of Congressman Rob Simmons (R-2).

Simmons, an ex-police commissioner, is well aware of the importance of protecting officers who wear the vests seven days a week, 365 days a year throughout their eight-hour shifts. Assistant Chief of Police for the Town of Groton Herthel Cooper said in Groton all 69 officers are issued individual vests plus six extras for a total of 75 vests in the town's stock.



Nicole Souza/Mystic River Press

Assistant Chief of Police for the Town of Groton Herthel Cooper displays one of the department's seven new bullet-proof vests.

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Each vest, Cooper said, lasts about five years.

"That's kind of the industrial standard for exposure and sweat," Cooper said. "These vests are used. They're heavy and hot and you wear them for the eight-hour shift."

The vests, on average range in

cost from \$500 to \$600, although higher caliber vests can cost up to \$1,000 depending on the amount of fire power the vest is designed to stop.

"Most standard vests can stand up to a 9mm impact, but it varies," Cooper said.

This year Groton Town Police purchased seven vests and received a total of \$2,213.21 reimbursement from the government

through the Bulletproof Vest Grant Act, which passed in 2000. Since that time, the U.S. Department of Justice provided priority funding for communities to help cover a portion of the vests' cost. Simmons recently announced a total of \$42,000 in police safety grants had been allocated to 11 eastern Connecticut towns, Groton Town, included, for the purchase of 120 bulletproof

vests, with federal funding available to jurisdictions of less than 100,000 people.

Police typically keep track of the vests' purchase dates, Cooper said, so that when five years are up they know how many vests to request reimbursement. In his 34 years on the force in town, Cooper said no officers have ever been wounded by a bullet.



MYSTIC RIVER PRESS

Thursday, July 24, 2003